

National Transportation Safety Board

§ 835.5

of the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974 (49 U.S.C. 1154(b)) (Safety Act), no part of a Board accident report may be admitted as evidence or used in any suit or action for damages growing out of any matter mentioned in such reports.

Factual accident report means the report containing the results of the investigator's investigation of the accident. The Board does not object to, and there is no statutory bar to, admission in litigation of factual accident reports. In the case of a major investigation, group chairman factual reports are factual accident reports.

[63 FR 71607, Dec. 29, 1998, as amended at 64 FR 5622, Feb. 4, 1999]

§ 835.3 Scope of permissible testimony.

(a) Section 701(e) of the FA Act and section 304(c) of the Safety Act preclude the use or admission into evidence of Board accident reports in any suit or action for damages arising from accidents. These sections reflect Congress' "strong * * * desire to keep the Board free of the entanglement of such suits." Rep. No. 93-1192, 93d Cong., 2d Sess., 44 (1974), and serve to ensure that the Board does not exert an undue influence on litigation. The purposes of these sections would be defeated if expert opinion testimony of Board employees, which may be reflected in the views of the Board expressed in its reports, were admitted in evidence or used in litigation arising out of an accident. The Board relies heavily upon its investigators' opinions in its deliberations. Furthermore, the use of Board employees as experts to give opinion testimony would impose a significant administrative burden on the Board's investigative staff. Litigants must obtain their expert witnesses from other sources.

(b) For the reasons stated in paragraph (a) of this section and § 835.1, Board employees may only testify as to the factual information they obtained during the course of an investigation, including factual evaluations embodied in their factual accident reports. However, they shall decline to testify regarding matters beyond the scope of their investigation, and they shall not give any expert or opinion testimony.

(c) Board employees may testify about the firsthand information they obtained during an investigation that is not reasonably available elsewhere, including observations recorded in their own factual accident reports. Consistent with the principles cited in § 835.1 and this section, current Board employees are not authorized to testify regarding other employee's reports, or other types of Board documents, including but not limited to safety recommendations, safety studies, safety proposals, safety accomplishments, reports labeled studies, and analysis reports, as they contain staff analysis and/or Board conclusions.

(d) Briefs of accidents may be released in conjunction with factual accident reports. Nevertheless, they are not part of those reports and are not to be admitted in evidence or used in a deposition approved under this part.

(e) Not all material in a factual accident report may be the subject of testimony. The purpose of the factual accident report, in great part, is to inform the public at large, and as a result the factual accident report may contain information and conclusions for which testimony is prohibited by this part.

(f) No employee may testify in any matter absent advance approval by the General Counsel as provided in this part.

[55 FR 41541, Oct. 12, 1990, as amended at 63 FR 71607, Dec. 29, 1998; 64 FR 5622, Feb. 4, 1999]

§ 835.4 Use of reports.

(a) As a testimonial aid and to refresh their memories, Board employees may use copies of the factual accident report they prepared, and may refer to and cite from that report during testimony.

(b) Consistent with section 701(e) of the FA Act and section 304(c) of the Safety Act, a Board employee may not use the Board's accident report for any purpose during his testimony.

[55 FR 41541, Oct. 12, 1990, as amended at 63 FR 71607, Dec. 29, 1998]

§ 835.5 Manner in which testimony is given in civil litigation.

(a) Testimony of Board employees with unique, firsthand information may be made available for use in civil